

Message Text

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TAGS: PINT, VT, IT

SUBJ: VATICAN AND ITALY: DEFROCKING OF DISSIDENT PRIEST

REF: ROME 10475

SUMMARY: VATICAN AUGUST 4 MADE PUBLIC DECISION TO DEFROCK
DOM FRANZONI, A MAJOR FIGURE IN "CHRISTIANS FOR SOCIALISM"
MOVEMENT IN ITALY. END SUMMARY.

1. REFTEL REPORTED ON POST-ELECTORAL PROBLEM FACED BY CHURCH IN
DEALING WITH DOM FRANZONI, THE EX-ABBOT OF MAJOR ROMAN BASILICA
WHO HAS BEEN MOVING FORCE BEHIND "CHRISTIANS FOR SOCIALISM,"
DOMINANT DISSENTER FROM RECENT VATICAN AND ITALIAN HIERARCHY
PRONOUNCEMENTS ON POLITICAL ROLE OF CATHOLICS IN ITALY, AND
WHO PRIOR TO JUNE 20 ELECTIONS PUBLICLY ANNOUNCED ADHERENCE TO
COMMUNIST PARTY'S PROGRAM AND INTENTION TO MILITATE ON BEHALF
OF THAT PARTY. ON JUNE 20, CARDINAL POLETTI, THE VICAR OF ROME,
IN OFFICIAL LETTER GAVE DOM FRANZONI TEN DAYS WITHIN WHICH TO
CHOOSE BETWEEN OPTIONS OF RETURNING TO CHURCH'S DISCIPLINE OR
FORMALLY REQUESTING REDUCTION TO LAY STATUS. SUBSEQUENTLY, THERE
WERE A LEAST TWO PRIVATE MEETINGS BETWEEN THEM AND TWO EXTENSIONS
TO DEADLINE FOR DECISION. APPARENTLY DOM FRANZONI REFUSED TO
RECAANT AND CASE WAS FORWARDED TO VATICAN'S DISCIPLINARY ORGAN,
CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, FOR ACTION.

2. ON AUGUST 5, "L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO" CARRIES TEXT OF DECREE

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WHICH REDUCES THE EX-ABBOT TO LAY STATUS. DECREE CITES FIVE

CHARGES, AMONG THEM THE ASSUMPTION OF ATTITUDES CONTRARY TO DECISIONS OF THE ITALIAN EPISCOPATE, AND REPEATED DISOBEDIENCE TO LEGITIMAE CHURCH AUTHORITIES. VATICAN ORGAN ALSO CARRIES LETTER FROM CARDINAL POLETTI TO "SIGNOR" GIOVANNI FRANZONI WHICH SKETCHES THE CARDINAL'S EFFORTS ON BEHALF OF DOM FRANZONI AND CITES THE MANY OPPORTUNITIES GIVEN HIM TO CHANGE HIS MIND, AND CONCLUDES IN FOLLOWING TERMS:

"INSTEAD YOU CHOSE THE PATH OF CONTESTATION, NOT ONLY ON THE POLITICAL LEVEL OBVIOUSLY SUBORDINATE FOR THE CHURCH, BUT ALSO ON THE RELIGIOUS-SOCIAL LEVEL AND EVEN THE DOCTRINAL LEVEL ABOUT PRECISE DOGMATIC TRUTHS, AS WAS OFFICIALLY COMMUNICATED TO YOU AGAIN IN THE CANONIC INTERROGATION OF LAST JULY 7. YOU WERE REPEATEDLY CONCEDED EVERY POSSIBILITY FOR CLARIFICATION AND DEFENCE ON EVERYTHING."

3. COMMENT: WITH THIS DECREE, POPE PAUL APPEARS TO BE FULFILLING RECENT POLICY OF MOVING AGAINST "OPPOSITE EXTREMES IN CATHOLIC CHURCH". FIRST WAS SUSPENSION "A DIVINIS" ON JULY 22 OF ARCH-BISHOP MARCEL LEFEBVRE WHO HAS BEEN "THORN" FROM THE RIGHT, OPPOSING IN NAME OF TRADITIONALISM POPE PAUL'S IMPLEMENTATION OF VATICAN COUNCIL II REFORMS. ACTION AGAINST DOM FRANZONI APPEARS DIRECTED AT OPPOSITION FROM THE LEFT AND IT ALSO EMPHASIZES VATICAN AND ITALIAN CHURCH HIERARCHY DETERMINATION TO UNDERLINE CONTINUING VIABILITY OF PRE-ELECTORAL APPEAL TO LAITY ON INCOMPATIBILITY OF CHRISTIANITY WITH COMMUNISM. (THERE STILL IS PENDING, HOWEVER, DEL DONNO CASE OF PRIEST WHO WAS ELECTED TO PARLIAMENT ON NEO-FASCIST MSI/DN PARTY WITHOUT AUTHORIZATION FROM ECCLESIASTICAL AUTHORITIES.) BEAUDRY

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